

June 1987

JOURNAL of the **MISSISSIPPI** State Medical Association





The President Speaking

Member Support Is Essential

W. LAMAR WEEMS, M.D.
Jackson, Mississippi

Within a few days of the time that this piece is penned, I will be installed as president of the Mississippi State Medical Association. I consider this title to be the highest honor of my professional career because I have such high regard for the physicians in Mississippi who elected me to the job and because of my admiration of the men who have occupied the position before me. I especially prize the opportunity to participate in the effort to shape the future of medical practice in Mississippi.

In the ensuing President's Messages this year, I will try to stick to issues which are of practical importance. In this initial greeting, however, I want to set a philosophical tone. My personal testimony is that I have great affection for the profession of medicine in the highest sense of professionalism. The practice of medicine has been kind and generous to me; tho, it has not always been gentle. Financial rewards have been more than adequate and I have received continuous nourishment of morale by grateful patients and respectful colleagues. Along with these benefits have also come harsh demands upon time and emotional energy. To practice medicine has been an awesome endeavor in which the challenge has always exceeded ability to respond; at once a humbling as well as an ennobling experience. I imagine that this personal statement of mine could apply to nearly all physicians. It seems to me that physicians who demean the importance of the intangible values in medicine demean themselves; for the real significance of life is not to be found only in material rewards.

Doctor-patient relationships entail more than mere financial transactions. These relationships are at the heart of professionalism and deserve to be defended by physicians on selfless as well as selfish grounds. Unfortunately, the influence of physicians is waning in the health care system, placing professionalism in serious jeopardy. Our old defenses will not work in the new environment because the environment of medicine is undergoing revolutionary change. Physicians individually and in the aggregate must adapt to change. MSMA has plans to try to maintain the influence of physicians in the system in these changing times. Plans have been thoughtfully developed and painstaking efforts are being made to implement them. You will hear the message over and over again from me this year that the support of the membership is essential.